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On Other Pages

US Protestants Ask for Basic Changes in Immigration Laws	Page 2
Coventry Music and Ballet Festival Cancelled	Page 3
New Church Set Up in Kenya	Page 3
Response to 'YMCA Buildings for Brotherhood' Grows	Page 4
Lutherans Transfer Property to Indian Church	Page 4
US Protestant Leaders Ask End to Nuclear Tests	Page 4

A Special Report

All German Synod Meets Amid DDR Attacks.	Page 7
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WCC Presidents' Message for Pentecost 1958

(Note for Editors: The text of this message is sent in advance for publication near the time of the observance, May 25.)

The seven members of the presidium of the World Council of Churches have again issued a message for reading in public worship of the congregations of the WCC's 169 member churches in over fifty countries on Sunday, May 25, Whitsunday.

The message reads:

"As representing the World Council of Churches we take occasion of this solemn festival of Pentecost to send a Christian greeting to our member churches throughout all five continents and in the islands of the seas. Grace be to you all and peace, from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We celebrate today the first Christian Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out upon all flesh - 'Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians' (Acts II, 9-11).

"The Spirit is a Spirit of unity. 'They were all together in one place' and the Spirit 'rested upon each' (Acts II, 1-3). Let us then always pray that the spirit of unity in faith may prevail amongst us, in accordance with the last prayer on earth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"The Spirit is a Spirit of power. 'You shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you' (Acts I, 8). Weak-willed as we are and lacking in resolve, the Gospel would be of little avail to us, if it merely instructed us how best to order our lives and our societies, but did not provide the enablement to act accordingly. At the first Pentecost men and women were lifted far above their ordinary selves, and in their weakness were made strong to do and to endure many things for which the Church still daily praises God.

"The Spirit is a Spirit of witness. He both bears witness Himself and inspires us to Christian witness. Part of the promise of the first Pentecost was 'Ye shall be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth' (Acts I, 8). It was on this day that the world mission of the Church began. Concern for the work of evangelism is a necessary condition of its enjoying such blessings. Moreover, our witness must be 'to all the world' and 'to every creature'. We must not stop short of 'the ends of the earth'.

"Today, then, let us not only commemorate that marvellous outpouring of the Spirit on the first Pentecost long ago, but let us seek by God's grace to recover the unity that was then so manifest, the power that was then enjoyed, and the zeal for world-wide evangelism that then filled every heart. 'And above all these' let us 'put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col. III, 14). As we join in prayer to this end, may God's richest and most enabling blessing fall upon us all."

The presidents of the World Council of Churches represent different types of Christian tradition and different parts of the world. They are:

The Very Reverend John Baillie, former principal of New College, Edinburgh, Scotland, Presbyterian; Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Methodist; Bishop G.K.A. Bell, United Kingdom, Anglican (Honorary President); Bishop F.K. Otto Dibelius, Bishop of Berlin and president of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany; Juhanon Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, South India; Archbishop Michael, New York, of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America; and the Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, New York, presiding bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.

E.P.S., Geneva

US Protestants Ask for Basic Changes in Immigration Laws

(New York) - Refugee resettlement leaders of eight Protestant denominations in the United States have urged Congress to consider a four-point plan calling for basic changes in US immigration law.

The statement asked the lawmakers to admit 3,000 of the 19,000 Hungarians still in Austria, and end the parolee status of the 32,000 now in the United States; bring the basis of the quota system up-to-date; give priority to close relatives of US citizens or residents, to skilled workers and to escapees and refugees; give more support to the UN's refugee programme and to the Inter-governmental Committee for European Migration to spearhead an international effort to solve the world refugee problem.

The plan was drawn up by representatives of the Congregational Christian Churches, Presbyterian Church, USA, National Lutheran Council, American Baptist Convention, Protestant Episcopal Church and the Brethren, Methodist and Evangelical and Reformed Churches.

E.P.S., Geneva

Coventry Music and Ballet Festival Cancelled

(London) - Coventry Cathedral's festival of music and ballet, scheduled to take place in the ruins of the old cathedral on Sunday, July 20, has been cancelled by the Bishop of Coventry, Dr. Cuthbert Bardsley (see EPS No. 16).

In making the announcement on April 24, Bishop Bardsley criticised what he termed the "irrational nature of the present Lord's Day legislation". The planned programme had drawn severe criticism from the Lord's Day Observance Society which had called it an "unworthy desecration of the Lord's Day". Bishop Bardsley had announced on April 21 that, despite opposition to the programme, it would be held and a collection would be taken instead of making an admission charge.

In cancelling the plans, the bishop said that in case of rain it would be impossible to hold the ballet in the Coventry Theatre because of the Theatre Act of 1843 which forbids artists to appear on a public stage in costume on Sunday. At the same time he said that while the originators of the project believed "that the majority of the people are behind us, there is a small proportion of people whose consciences have been disturbed by this venture".

"We believe most strongly," the bishop continued, "that the offering of beauty through music, singing, drama and dancing is permissible on the Lord's Day. We believe that the Sabbath should be a day of recreation in the sense of re-creation of body and mind as well as soul. To this end we should not sit down under the present old-fashioned and inadequate Lord's Day legislation dating from a bygone age."

The Festival Ballet Company with Alicia Markova and John Gilpin and the City of Birmingham Orchestra were to have taken part. E.P.S., Geneva

Bishop Manikam Stresses Need of US Aid for India

(Boston, Mass.) - It is very unlikely that India will become Communist in the next five years, but at the same time it is essential for her to receive "generous foreign aid and technical assistance" from the United States, Lutheran Bishop Rajah B. Manikam said at a recent press conference in Boston.

In the United States as a visiting lecturer at the Boston University School of Theology, Bishop Manikam said that his country's "sympathies are with democracy, but we follow the policies of neutrality because we are afraid of power blocs. We were once in a power bloc, the power bloc of Great Britain, and in two world wars our armies marched although we never declared war. India feels that to be a member of a power bloc is to be a camp follower."

Bishop Manikam said US aid was needed to make India's second five-year plan successful. E.P.S., Geneva

New Church Set Up in Kenya

(Nairobi). - A group of seven African Anglican clergymen has voted to break away from the Anglican Communion and form a new church in Kenya called the Church of Christ of Africa. At the same time the Bishop of Mombasa has announced that he will re-admit the priests if they will abandon the plans.

The group's leader, the Rev. A.M. Ajuoga, said the sect already has a following of 12,000. Reason for the break, he said, is that "the doctrine of Christ as 'Our Saviour and the lover of mankind' is 'not properly interpreted by the Anglican Church'".

The seven priests have all worked in the Nyanza district where sects are numerous. Last year the Bishop of Mombasa, the Right Rev. L.G. Beecher, withdrew the licences of two of the priests. When the separatist sect was registered, the other priests associated with it announced they had severed their connection automatically with the Anglican Church. E.P.S., Geneva

Response to 'YMCA Buildings for Brotherhood' Appeal Grows

(Geneva) - A special issue of World Communiqué, official publication of the World Alliance of YMCAs, published this week in Geneva, reports that YMCAs in thirty-three countries are working with North American movements to raise \$16,000,000 for 'Buildings for Brotherhood'. The programme will help meet urgent needs of youths in more than a hundred cities throughout the world.

The publication reports that Mr. John D. Rockefeller Jr. has contributed half a million dollars, and over a million more has been received or pledged from Mr. Cleveland Dodge, Mr. James C. Donnell II, Mr. William J. Grede and other members of the International Committee of the North American YMCAs. The YMCA associations in the United States and Canada have accepted a goal of \$5,000,000. Funds for the special campaign are being raised in addition to the regular World Service programme which amounts to more than \$1,500,000 annually in the United States and Canada. The American Hi-Y Congress has appealed to its members to contribute a dollar each to the appeal.

President Eisenhower, the Hon. Charles H. Malik, the Hon. Charles D. Sherman, president of the World Alliance of YMCAs, were among those who sent special messages to the opening of the Buildings for Brotherhood campaign in Cleveland - a gathering of 1,200 North American and overseas YMCA leaders addressed by Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, secretary-general of the United Nations.

Developments in relation to the entire post-war building programme of national YMCA movements on all continents - stressing the diversity of the YMCA's service and the consequent diversity of Association buildings - are also included in the World Communiqué issue. E.P.S., Geneva

Lutherans Transfer Property to Indian Church

(New York) - The United Lutheran Church of America has turned over property valued at more than three million dollars to the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church at Guntur, India.

The property includes eight hospitals, a college, five high schools and training schools and 800 elementary schools. At the same time, the United Lutherans are handing over 2,000 churches, chapels and other buildings to the Indian church.

The president of the Andhra Church, Dr. G. Devasahayam, has praised the ULC for "inaugurating this new era of partnership". The Andhra church has 2,300 congregations and 250,000 members in five synods. It was begun as a mission in 1842. E.P.S., Geneva

US Protestant Leaders Ask End to Nuclear Tests

(New York) - A group of 140 US Protestant clergymen and educators has called on the United States to abandon nuclear tests scheduled for the Pacific during the next few months, in a statement released in New York on April 21.

Referring to a statement made by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in New Haven last August, the church leaders said that "now is the time for Christians in the United States to take action in line with these proposals". The WCC committee had advocated multilateral or unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons.

"Last August," the US Protestants said, "multitudes responded favourably to the suggestions, having come to feel that the arms race had gone far enough and had to be stopped. True wisdom and courage would be for Americans now to lead in the demand that the arms race must stop, 'the barriers of distrust' must be broken down.

"To this end we call upon our government, fully aware of the risks involved, in line with the responsibility laid upon us by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches:

"To cancel the tests scheduled for April to August in the Pacific ...

"To declare a moratorium on all testing of weapons of mass destruction 'in the hope that others will do the same, a new confidence be born, and foundations laid for reliable agreements'."

Signers of the statement include President John A. Mackay of Princeton Theological Seminary, Dean J. Robert Nelson of the Vanderbilt University School of Religion, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. of Montgomery, Alabama, the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, minister emeritus of Riverside Church in New York, and nine Methodist and Episcopal bishops. E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

The fourth volume of "Documents on Christian Unity", edited by Bishop G.K.A. Bell of the United Kingdom, an honorary president of the World Council of Churches, has just been published. The book covers the period between 1948 and 1957 and reports on the 1948 Lambeth Conference, the 1948 and 1954 Assemblies of the WCC, contains pronouncements of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches and gives official statements on relations between churches in the United Kingdom, the United States, Nigeria, Ceylon and India.

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US Congressman Brooks Hays, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, reports that religious groups in Russia need more church buildings because the number of worshippers exceeds the present capacity of meeting places. Just back from a visit to Baptists in Moscow, Mr. Hays says "people stood in every available space in the aisles and at the back of the church".

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Five members of the Anglican monastic order, the Community of the Resurrection, will visit monasteries of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union this month. The group will be led by Father Mark Tweedy.

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The first year of sponsored radio broadcasting by AVACO, largest Christian broadcasting agency in Japan, was a great success, according to the agency. The programme "Kokoro no Uta" (Songs of the Heart) of hymns and a short message reaches about a million listeners on Radio Tokyo.

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The director of the Department of Stewardship and Benevolence of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA is touring union churches in ten Latin American countries between April 12 and May 13. NCC officials said that North American stewardship techniques are fairly new for many English-language churches in Central and South America.

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Australian Protestants have criticised the state-approved plans of a Roman Catholic order to raise money for new school facilities through a lottery in which the first prize will be a suburban hotel valued at \$400,000. The Rev. Dr. Malcolm MacKay, a former secretary of the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, said the raffle betrayed "little conception of fundamental Christian ethics".

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On July 1, Mr. Christopher Dawson, well-known British Roman Catholic historian and author, will become the first Charles Chauncey Stillman guest professor of Roman Catholic theological studies at Harvard University Divinity School in New Haven, Conn.

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In Bolivia five Roman Catholic priests have become Protestants during the last 18 months and are devoting themselves to work in their new churches. One of them had been sent into a rural district to oppose the work of the Protestant groups there. To prepare himself for his task the priest undertook a systematic study of the Bible, and subsequently became a Protestant.

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Thirty Protestant and Catholic clergy from the Hungarian churches have been invited by the Soviet Ministry of Church Affairs to visit the USSR.

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At the meeting of the Bavarian Synod in Regensburg it was decided that women can be candidates for election as members of the Synod. The Evangelical Church in Bavaria and the Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe are the only Protestant regional churches in Germany which still exclude women from membership of the Synod.

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During his visit to England, German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer gave DM. 50,000 to Coventry Cathedral, as a German contribution towards its restoration. In November, 1940, the cathedral was completely destroyed by German bombers.

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Dr. Gutierrez-Marin, president of the Spanish Evangelical Church, gave a series of lectures in Holland at the end of April on Protestantism in Spain to the Synod of the Reformed Free Churches, the Dutch Ecumenical Council and in various theological faculties and churches.

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A five-man delegation from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), just back from a three-week visit to the Soviet Union, has expressed the hope that a delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church can visit Germany during the year (see EPS No. 16). Patriarch Alexius of the Russian Orthodox Church conferred the Order of Saint Vladimir on the German delegates during their visit. The order commemorates the Grand Duke Vladimir, whose name is associated with Russia's conversion to Christianity. It was the first time it had been conferred since the Revolution.

E.P.S., Geneva

A Special ReportAll-German Synod Meets Amid DDR Attacks

As predicted, the All-German Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) met this week in Berlin in an atmosphere of tension and division and surrounded, at times, by demonstrators from East Germany.

Chief targets of attack by East German publications and leaders were the questions chosen for discussion at the Synod, and Bishop Otto Dibelius, president of the Council of the EKD.

The agenda item, 'The Church and Education', was criticised as "interference with the rights of the German Democratic Republic and contrary to the constitution" and as "provocation in face of the honest peace-policy of the DDR".

"Anyone who identifies himself with Bishop Dibelius is separating himself from peace and democracy," according to a full-page article in 'Neues Deutschland', leading organ of the East German Socialist Unity Party, published just before the Synod sessions opened on April 26.

An article written by Mr. Albert Norden, a top official in the East German Government Press and Information office, reads: "As long as the anti-semitic atom bomb politician holds office as the Protestant NATO-Pope, he will reduce the church to an instrument for war and reaction."

At the same time, it was learned that the East German Government had tried to influence the stand of Synod members from the East. According to 'Neue Zeit', journal of the Communist sympathising Christian Democratic Union in the DDR, Bishop Gerhard Noth of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony and seven other members of the EKD were "informed that discussion of educational questions at the Synod constitutes interference in the rights of the German Democratic Republic and is contrary to the constitution". It was pointed out, the paper said, that the debate on education was intended as a blind to divert the attention of the people from the campaign against atomic weapons. District council representatives said they hoped the Synod delegates "would insist that the Synod take steps which would promote the vital interests of the German people".

Sanctions Threatened

The East German Government may decide to punish those who fail to comply with its demands by applying sanctions. This new possibility became clear with the publication of an "expert legal opinion" on the EKD's previously concluded Agreement on Spiritual Care in the Armed Forces. The agreement deals with the appointment of army chaplains and was passed last year by the Synod.

"Support for the agreement in whatever form is a crime against the State and a penal offence," states the legal opinion. According to the legal advice, church leaders who support the agreement make use of church institutions to undermine the constitution and therefore jeopardise the legality of the institutions. It has been pointed out that the legal opinion has not yet been recognised as binding by the government in East Berlin.

Demonstrators Disturb Sessions in East Berlin

While the 120 members of the Synod, forty of them from Eastern Germany, were listening to a report by Bishop Dibelius in the Stöcker-Stift in East Berlin, a crowd of demonstrators gathered in front of the building and interrupted the meeting with cries of "We have a petition", "Our factory has sent us", "Can we speak to the Bishop?"

Seven of the demonstrators were given permission by the Synod to enter the meeting hall (Bishop Dibelius voted in favour of their admission), and their leader, a teacher who is a member of the East Berlin parliament, addressed the delegates.

Saying that he was speaking in the name of "all the citizens of the German Democratic Republic and, as we know, of most of the citizens of Western Germany also", he urged the Synod to remove educational questions from its agenda, to reject atomic weapons unequivocally and to revoke the agreement on spiritual care in the armed forces.

The deputation, which remained in the hall until Bishop Dibelius had finished his bishop's report, were "visibly impressed by the religious atmosphere of the Synod", according to a West German newspaper.

Commenting on the demonstration, a Synod member from the East pointed out that it was a part of the agitation and massive pressure experienced by churchmen in the DDR for months.

E.P.S., Geneva